



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

November 10, 2008

5:00 P.M.

Council Office

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

V. Spencer, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, J. Waltman, S. Marmarou, M. Baez, S. Fuhs, D. Sterner

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

D. Cituk, L. Kelleher, S. Katzenmoyer, R. Hottenstein, T. McMahon, C. Younger, C. Kanezo

Vaughn Spencer, President of Council, called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

I. Executive Session

Council entered into executive session at 5:16 pm to discuss litigation issues.
Council exited executive session at 5:37 pm.

II. Reading Public Library

F. Kasprowicz, B. Roberts, R. Hatt, W. Maslo, and P. Hoh, representing the Reading Public Library and Library Board of Trustees, joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Spencer reviewed the need to meet regarding the City's financial issues. He noted the need for the City and County to work together to keep this important operation open.

Mr. Kasprowicz thanked Council for their past support of the library. He noted that he appreciates the challenges faced by the City. He described the funding cuts of the past, the awards won by the library, and the programs currently available. He noted that further funding reductions would have severe consequences. He noted that if a branch were to close or operating hours cut, State funding would be lost. He noted that careful consideration is needed.

Mr. Hatt described the composition of the Library Board. He noted that there are numerous vacancies at this time. The largest amount of funding received by the library is through the state. This amount is distributed throughout the 21 County library systems. This funding pays for full-time staff and utilities. The \$900,000 budgeted by the County for the Reading Public Library is in addition to the County money given to support the County system. He also noted that any further reductions in library operations would jeopardize state funding.

Mr. Spencer reiterated his understanding of the problem. He thanked those present for this additional information. He noted the need for a forum on library services County-wide. He also noted the possibility of a 1% library tax. He noted that this problem is County-wide.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the library system is valued. She noted the need for good regional dialog to sustain the system. She stated that libraries also serve as community centers. She further stated that this review should occur outside budget discussions.

Mr. Hoh informed Council that the Library Board submitted a letter to the County Commissioners requesting that they meet to begin long-term planning. The first meeting is scheduled for November 12. He noted that these issues will not be resolved by January 1.

Mr. Fuhs noted that Council had been in budget discussions prior to the Committee of the Whole meeting and that the Administration will be submitting their outline of core services and possible service cuts. He noted that all City entities must share in any service reductions.

Mr. Waltman noted that service reductions must be approached in a planned manner. He noted the need to sustain services while planning occurs. He noted that it is premature to state that the entire library system would be closed.

Mr. Hoh noted that the Library Board understands the financial crisis that the City is facing. He noted that Governor Rendell has cut state funding of libraries by ½. He indicated that further reductions can be made by the library but that each further reduction will effect a crucial service.

Mr. Sterner indicated that this discussion arose during the budget process. He noted his hope that the County would increase their \$900,000 contribution. He noted that the public must know that the situation is critical.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if the library performs fundraising. Mr. Hoh noted that they have tried but that it is not easy. Professional fundraisers will not work with the Library Board because they would need to approach City residents only.

Mayor McMahon requested that the Library Board arrange a summit of all stakeholders. He noted that the City will participate. He noted the need to define targets.

Mr. Spencer requested that the Library Board update Council after the meeting scheduled for November 12.

III. Agenda Review

Marty Mayes joined the meeting at this time.

Council discussed the request to introduce the PRD. After careful consideration Council decided to review and discuss the PRD and its objectives at the November 17th Work Session and introduce the PRD Ordinance after resulting changes are made.

Council reviewed the agenda for this evening's meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

By: _____
Linda A. Kelleher, City Clerk